

Message Text

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S E C R E T BONN 13405

EXDIS

ROME FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY MOOSE

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2
TAGS: PEPR SU US RH
SUBJECT: SOVIET DIPLOMAT COMMENTS ON AFRICAN AFFAIRS

1. DURING A CONVERSATION ON OTHER MATTERS, A
SOVIET COUNSELOR HERE ASKED THE POLITICAL COUNSELOR ABOUT
OUR CURRENT VIEWS REGARDING RHODESIA (WHICH HE TERMED
ZIMBABWE). THE POLITICAL COUNSELOR BRIEFED HIM,
SUMMARIZING OUR EFFORTS TO BRING ALL PARTIES TOGETHER.

2. THE SOVIET COUNSELOR OBSERVED THAT HE WAS GLAD TO
HEAR THAT WE WERE MAKING SUCH EFFORTS. HE SAID THAT THE
SOVIET UNION DID NOT WANT TO GET INVOLVED IN RHODESIA
AND DID NOT WANT TO SEE A CONFLICT THERE. HE SAID SUCH
A CONFLICT WOULD INCREASE PRESSURES FOR INVOLVEMENT
WHICH THE SOVIET UNION DID NOT WANT.

3. CONTINUING, THE SOVIET COUNSELOR SAID THAT "WE HAD
BEEN APPROACHED ABOUT BECOMING INVOLVED IN NAMIBIA,"

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 BONN 13405 211627Z

BUT ADDED THAT THE SOVIETS HAD REFUSED. IN THE
CONTEXT, IT WAS THE IMPLICATION OF HIS REMARKS THAT
THERE HAD BEEN AN EFFORT TO GET CUBANS TO
PLAY A ROLE IN THE NAMIBIA CONFLICT.

4. THE SOVIET DIPLOMAT ADDED THAT THE SOVIETS GENERALLY
DID NOT WANT TO BECOME OVER-INVOLVED IN AFRICA BUT THAT

THEY DID NOT HAVE THE KIND OF ECONOMIC RESOURCES THAT PERMITTED HELP THROUGH THOSE MEANS. HE CITED SOMALIA AS A CASE OF WHERE THEIR AID HAD BEEN MISUSED AND WHERE THEY HAD FOUND THEMSELVES IN A DIFFICULT POLITICAL POSITION THAT THEY HAD NOT WANTED. HE IMPLIED THAT THE SOVIETS FOUND SITUATIONS IN AFRICA GETTING OUT OF CONTROL AND THEN FOUND IT DIFFICULT TO PULL OUT EVEN THOUGH THEY DID NOT WISH TO BECOME FURTHER INVOLVED. HE SAID THAT HE KNEW THAT WE HAD HAD SOME EXPERIENCE WITH THIS BUT THAT THE SOVIET UNION HAD NOT, AND WAS SIMPLY NOT AWARE OF HOW TO HANDLE SITUATIONS OF THAT KIND.

5. COMMENT: WE ARE NOT SURE HOW MUCH OF THIS IS DIS-INFORMATION DELIBERATELY INTENDED TO MISLEAD US AS TO SOVIET PURPOSES IN AFRICA. HOWEVER, THE CONTEXT IN WHICH IT WAS SAID WAS NOT ONE THAT LENT ITSELF TO DELIBERATE PREVARICATIONS. MOREOVER, THE HINT THAT THERE WERE DIFFERENCES OF VIEW AND UNCERTAINTIES WITHIN THE SOVIET UNION ON AFRICAN POLICY WOULD BE AN UNUSUAL ONE FOR A SOVIET DIPLOMAT TO MAKE ON INSTRUCTIONS. WE ARE FORWARDING IT TO THE ADDRESSEES FOR EVALUATION AND FOR FURTHER DISTRIBUTION AS THEY REGARD APPROPRIATE.
STOESSEL

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